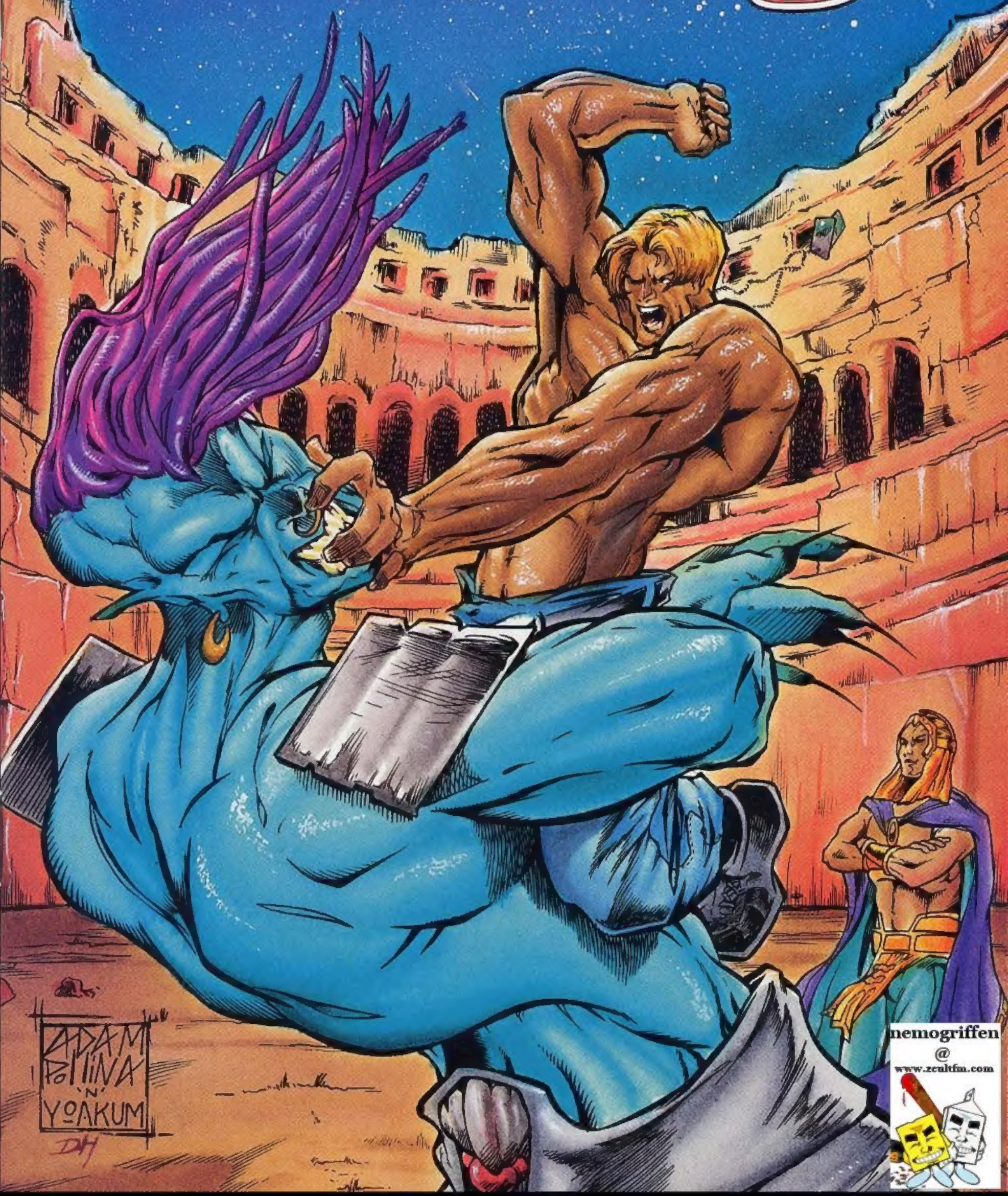



DEFIANT
5
\$2.50
\$3.50 CANADA

CHARLEMAGNE



ADAM
BOLINA
IN
YOAKUM
DH

nemogriffen
@
www.zcultfm.com


ONE MAN CAN

THERE'S THIS GUY WHO SAYS HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD. HE APPARENTLY HAS THE POWER TO DO SO. HE CALLS HIMSELF THE DANCER.

RIGHT NOW, HE'S IN A PENTHOUSE APARTMENT IN NEW YORK CITY, GETTING READY FOR THE BIG MOMENT.

THEN THERE'S CHARLES SMITH.

HE NEARLY DIED ONCE, BUT CAME BACK FROM THE EDGE OF DEATH.

NOW, THAT ALONE MIGHT MAKE YOU FEEL SPECIAL...

...BUT CHARLES SMITH RETURNED TO LIFE REMADE, WITH AWESOME STRENGTH.

HE FIGURED THERE MUST BE A REASON. AND WHEN HE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE DANCER, HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS.

HE LIVES TO STOP THE DANCER, AND UNTIL HE DOES, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS. HE'S BEEN HUNTING THE GUY.

A SECOND AGO, FROM THE TOP OF A SKYSCRAPER, CHARLES SPOTTED HIM TWENTY STORIES BELOW.

CAN'T WASTE TIME WHEN DESTINY AWAITS. HE DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER YELLING "GERONIMO."

PLOT & SCRIPT BY: JIM SHOOTER AND D.G. CHICHESTER • PENCILER: ADAM POLLINA
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EDITOR: JOSEPH A. JAMES • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JIM SHOOTER





MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BELOW...



SOMETIME
LATER...

... CHARLES BEGINS TO
FEEL THE HEAT...

...SEARING
HIM.
COOKING
HIM.

THE HEAT EVOKES THE
MEMORY OF
CRADLING HIS DYING
BROTHER'S CHARRED
AND SMOLDERING
BODY IN HIS ARMS...

...THE MEMORY BILLOWS
LIKE NAPALM INTO A
FIERY NIGHTMARE...

... AND THE NIGHTMARE JOLTS
HIM AWAKE SCREAMING.

AHHH!

HIS CONSCIOUSNESS
SIFTS REALITY FROM
SUBCONSCIOUS
HORROR...

...BUT THE SCORCHING
SUN BEATING DOWN
AND THE CHAINS
BITING HIS FLESH
ARE BARELY
PREFERABLE.

WHAT IS
THIS?

HELLO,
CHARLES.

YOU TRICKED
ME! WHAT DID
YOU DO...
DRUG ME?

YES,
WE
DID!

I'M SORRY I
HAVE TO DO
THIS, CHARLES,
BUT...

...OH, BY THE
WAY THIS IS
MY SERVANT,
IGO.

IT IS AN HONOR
TO MEET CHARLES
SMITH THE
CHAMPION OF
LIFE!

I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU, CHARLES. I DID FIGHT THE DANCER AGES AGO...

...IN MY OWN TIME.

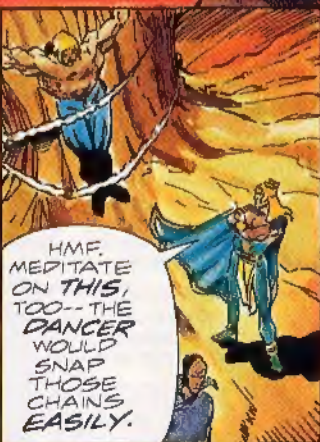
IN FACT, YOU MAY THINK OF **THIS** AS YOUR FIRST LESSON AND FIRST TEST!

I CAN HELP YOU PREPARE, AND I WILL...

WHILE YOU'RE BOUND AND HELPLESS, **MEDITATE** UPON YOUR STRENGTH. EXAMINE IT... COME TO **KNOW** IT...

...AND CONSIDER CAREFULLY ITS LIMITS. A WARRIOR SHOULD KNOW THE **TRUE** EXTENT OF HIS POWER.

LET ME **GO**, AND I'LL SHOW YOU **POWER**!



HMF. MEDITATE ON **THIS**, TOO-- THE **DANCER** WOULD SNAP THOSE CHAINS EASILY.

COME **BACK** HERE! LET ME **GO**!

RELAX, AND BE GLAD YOU'RE NOT FIGHTING THE **DANCER** NOW.

I'M SAVING YOUR **GUTT**, BOY!

IS IT WISE, THRAHKAHL, TO INTERFERE WITH THE ONE FATE CHOSE TO BE THE CHAMPION OF LIFE?

MAYBE FATE CHOSE ME TO INTERFERE WITH HIM, I GO.

BESIDES, I'VE BEEN GETTING READY TO COPE WITH THE **DANCER** FOR SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS. I'VE GOT PLANS AFOOT...

...THAT **COULD** GET RID OF THE **DANCER'S** REASON FOR WIPING OUT ALL LIFE.

I DON'T NEED SOME OVEREAGER, OVER-GROWN, UNDER-RIPE, HALF-BAKED KID MESSING THINGS UP.

HMF. AFTER A WHILE OUT IN THIS HEAT, HE'LL BE QUITE **FULLY BAKED**.

THE HEAT MAKES THE DOGTAGS
SIZZLE AGAINST HIS SKIN.

THEY WERE
PETE'S.

CHARLES'
BROTHER.
HIS FRIEND.
HIS HERO.

SEEMED LIKE ONE DAY THEY WERE HOME,
JOKING AT THE FAMILY DINNER TABLE...

... THEN SUDDENLY THEY WERE IN
'NAM, AND WITH BLOODY FINGERS,
CHARLES WAS PULLING THE DOGTAGS
FROM PETE'S BURNING CORPSE.

THEY SIZZLED
IN HIS HAND.

IT
WAS
ALL
SO
UN-
FAIR...

...AND HE WISHED WITH ALL HIS
HEART THAT HE HAD THE POWER
TO DO SOMETHING TO STOP THE
KILLING... STOP DEATH.

...A LONG TIME LATER, HE
AWAKENED FROM A COMA
WITH POWER INDEED--
MIRACULOUS STRENGTH.

MAYBE MORE THAN HE
KNOWS, HE DECIDES TO
MEDITATE ON HIS STRENGTH.

AND, THEN...

DID YOU
HEAR...

...THAT?

ANY LAST
WORDS, YOU
SCUM-BUMS?



THAT WAS A DIRTY TRICK, AND I'M GONNA...

BUT...BUT, CHARLES, YOU PASSED THE TEST!



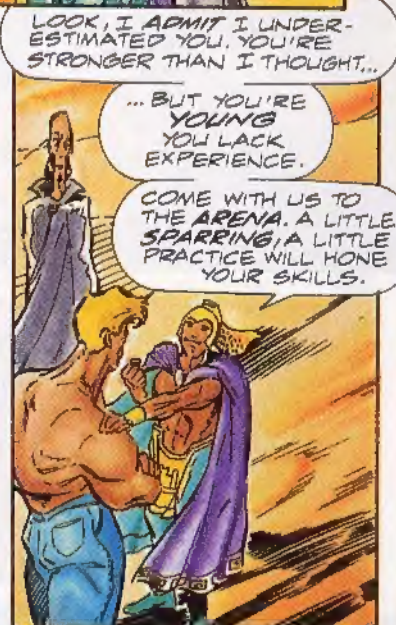
GET ME BACK WHERE YOU FOUND ME... NOW.

DIDN'T YOU FIND STRENGTH WITHIN YOURSELF THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD?

THERE'S MORE YOU CAN LEARN. MORE YOU SHOULD KNOW!



THE DANCER IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE, YOUNG WARRIOR. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.



LOOK, I ADMIT I UNDERESTIMATED YOU. YOU'RE STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT...

...BUT YOU'RE YOUNG. YOU LACK EXPERIENCE.

COME WITH US TO THE ARENA. A LITTLE SPARRING, A LITTLE PRACTICE WILL HONE YOUR SKILLS.



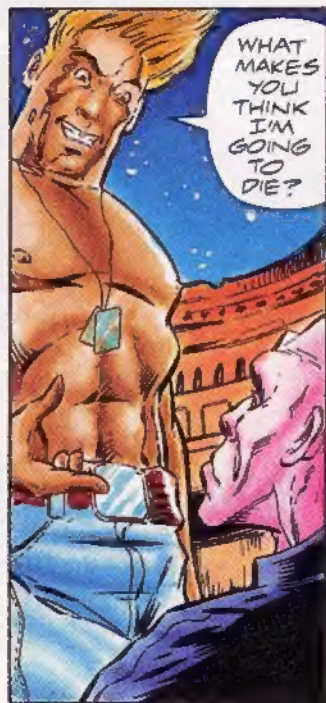
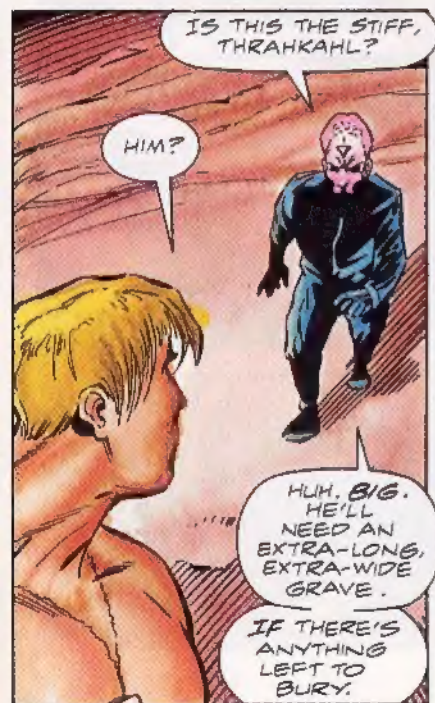
OKAY. LET'S GO.

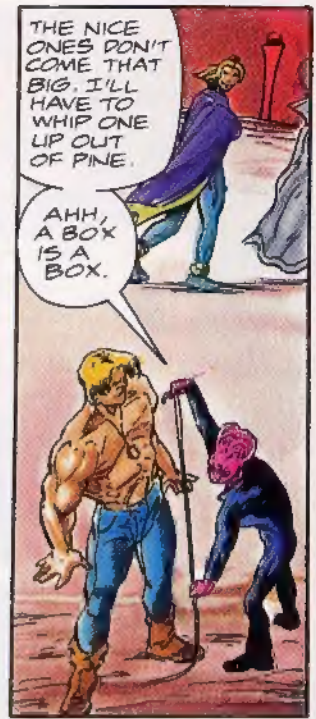
AH, GOOD. THIS WAY.

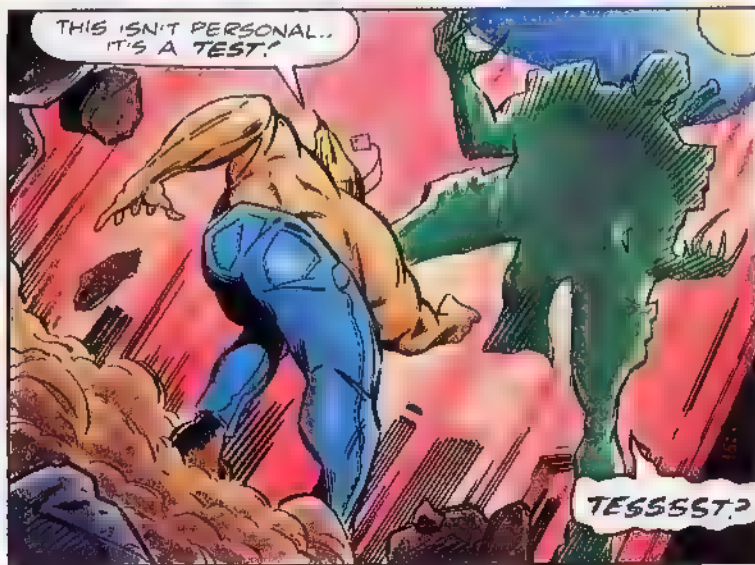
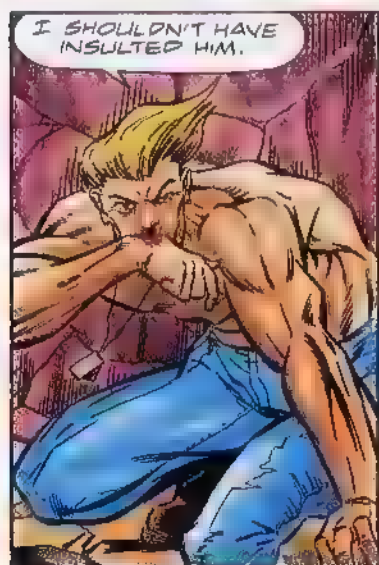
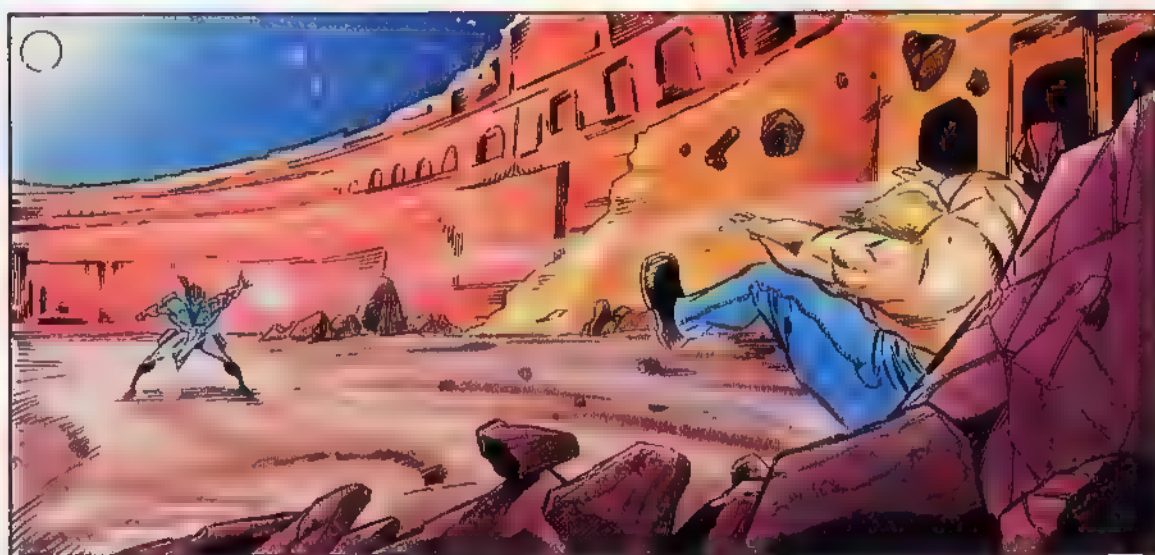
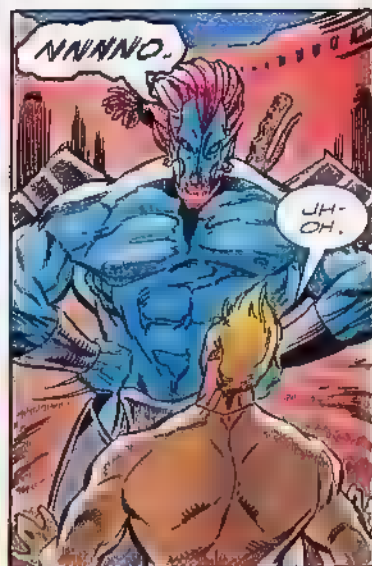
YOU ARE WISE TO COOPERATE, YOUNG WARRIOR.

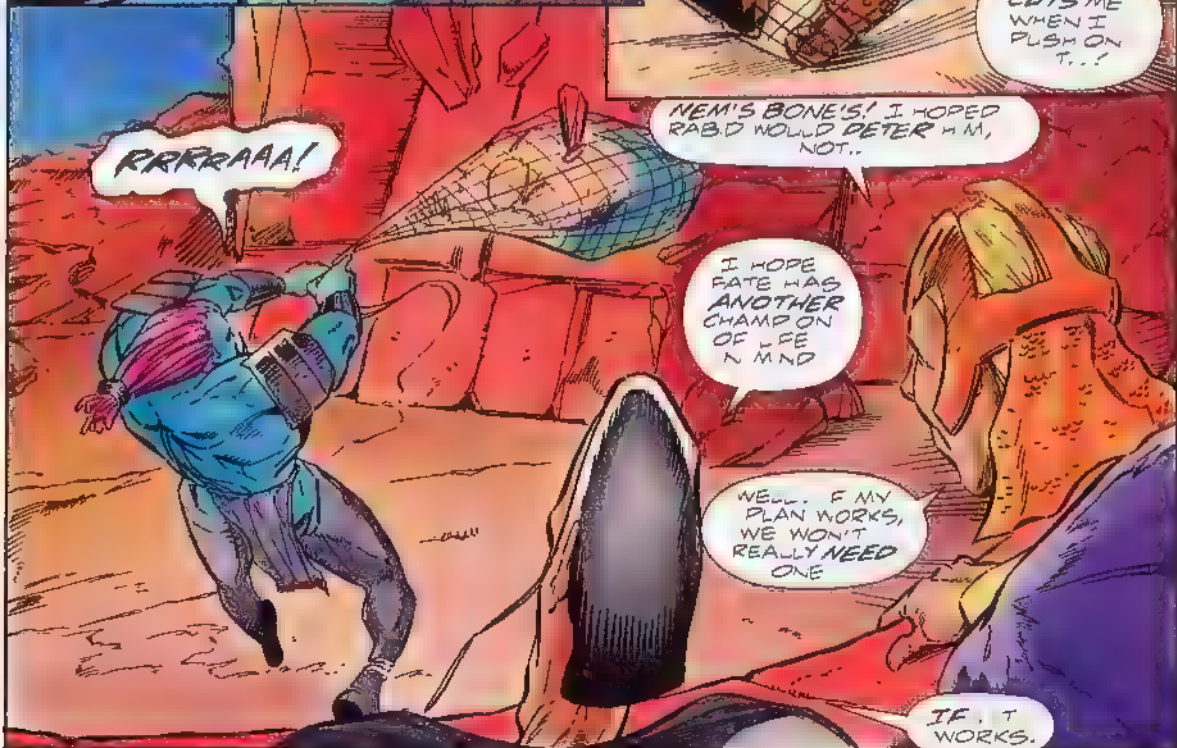
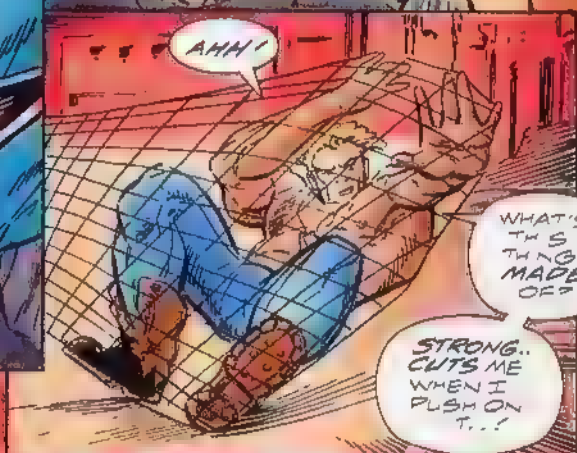
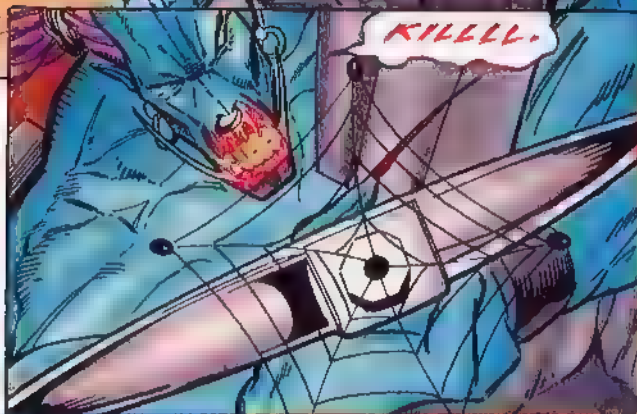
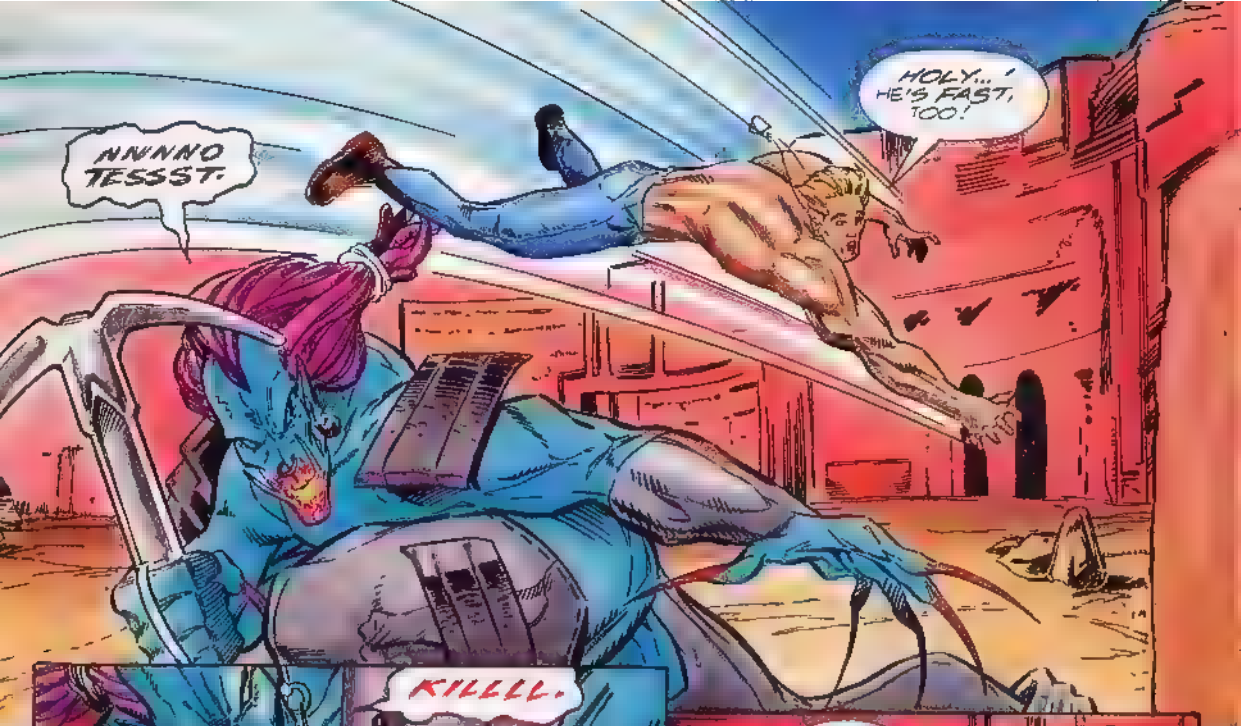


OH, I'M WISER THAN YOU GUYS THINK.





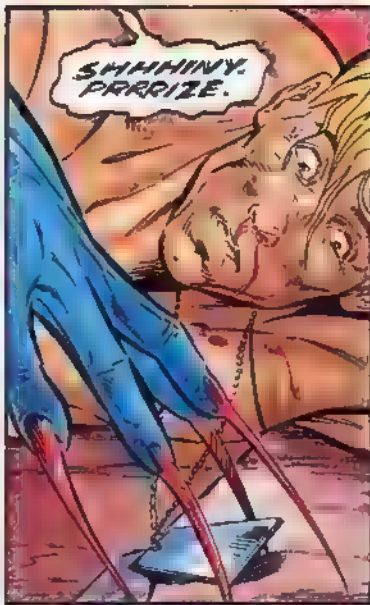






HRRRR.

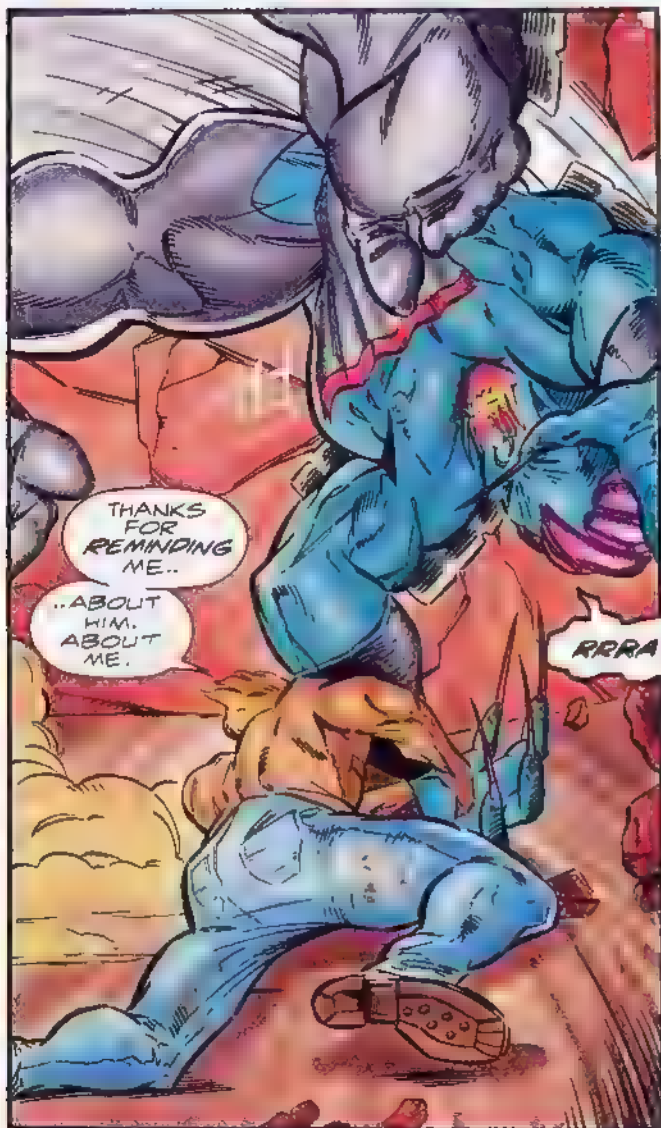
OW...
AHH...
AHHH



SHHHHNY.
PARRIZE.



NO!



THANKS
FOR
REMINING
ME...

..ABOUT
HIM.
ABOUT
ME.

RRRAOWW!



SECONDS LATER..

DON'T EVEN
THINK ABOUT
GETTING UP.

NNNNNO.

CHARLES, I I WAS HOPING TO MAKE YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'RE NOT YET READY I DIDN'T MEAN FOR YOU TO BE SLAUGHTERED I'M SORRY.

YOU DIDN'T FOOL ME, THRAKKAHL. I KNEW YOU WERE A RAT, BUT I FIGURED IF I COULD DEAL WITH WHATEVER YOU THREW AT ME.

BESIDES, I WON.

NO! FUNNY STUFF

KILL!

GRRRRRND.

THISSS GRRRRUB BEAT UP OURRR LITTLE BRRROTHER!

RRRID HIMMM.

OH, GEEZ

AGAIN, CHARLES, I'M SORRY I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP RABID FROM KILLING YOU, BUT...

...NOW HIS WHOLE FAMILY'S UPSET.

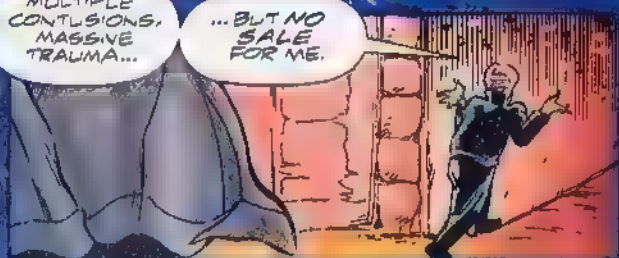
HOURS
LATER...



NOW THIS
IS WHAT I
CALL TRAGIC.

MULTIPLE
CONTUSIONS.
MASSIVE
TRAUMA...

...BUT NO
SALVE
FOR ME.



THANKS,
THRAHKAHL.

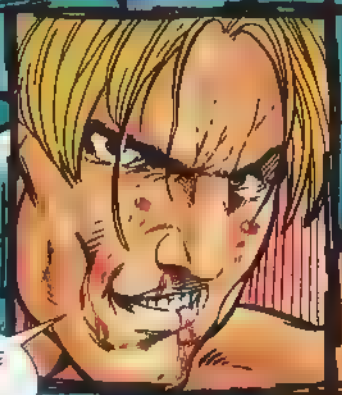
I LEARNED
TWO THINGS--
NEVER
UNDER-
ESTIMATE AN
OPPONENT...



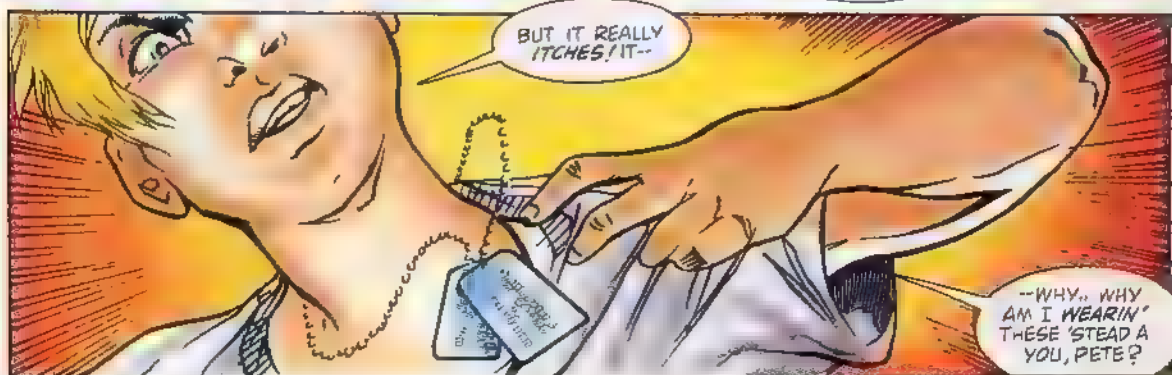
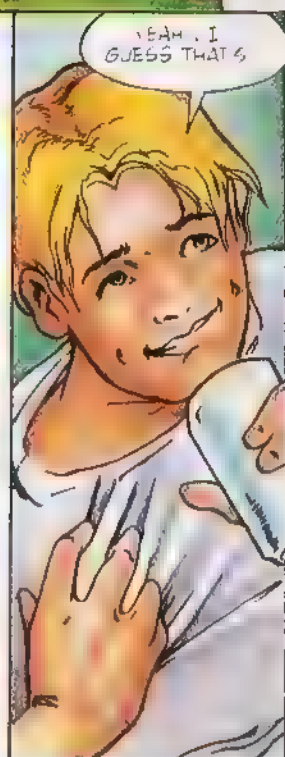
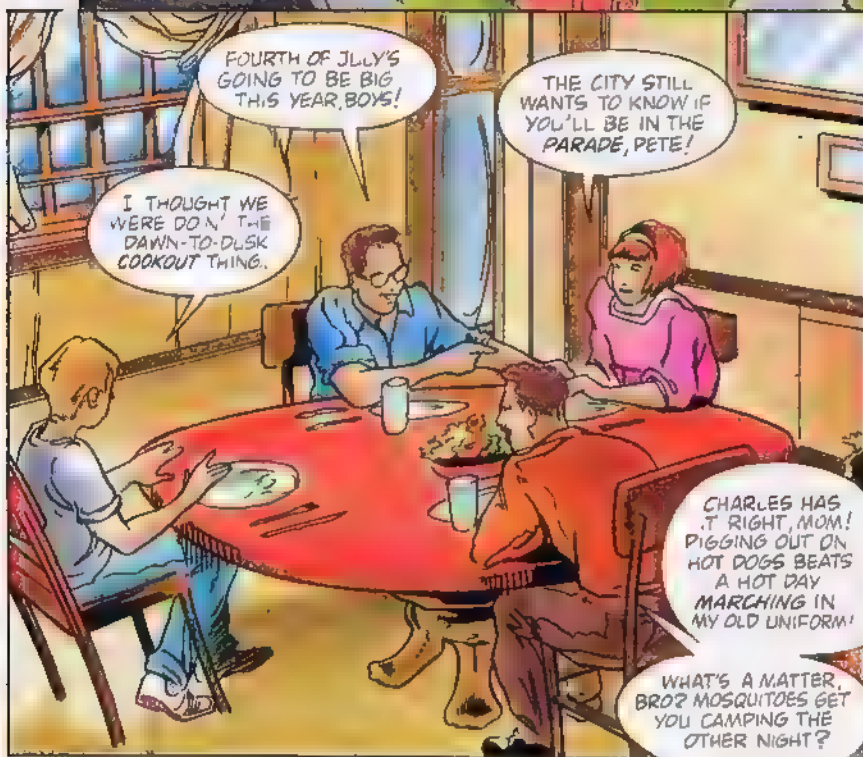
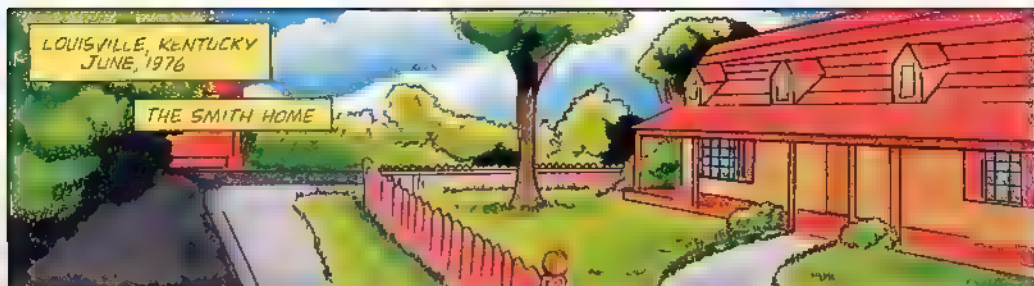


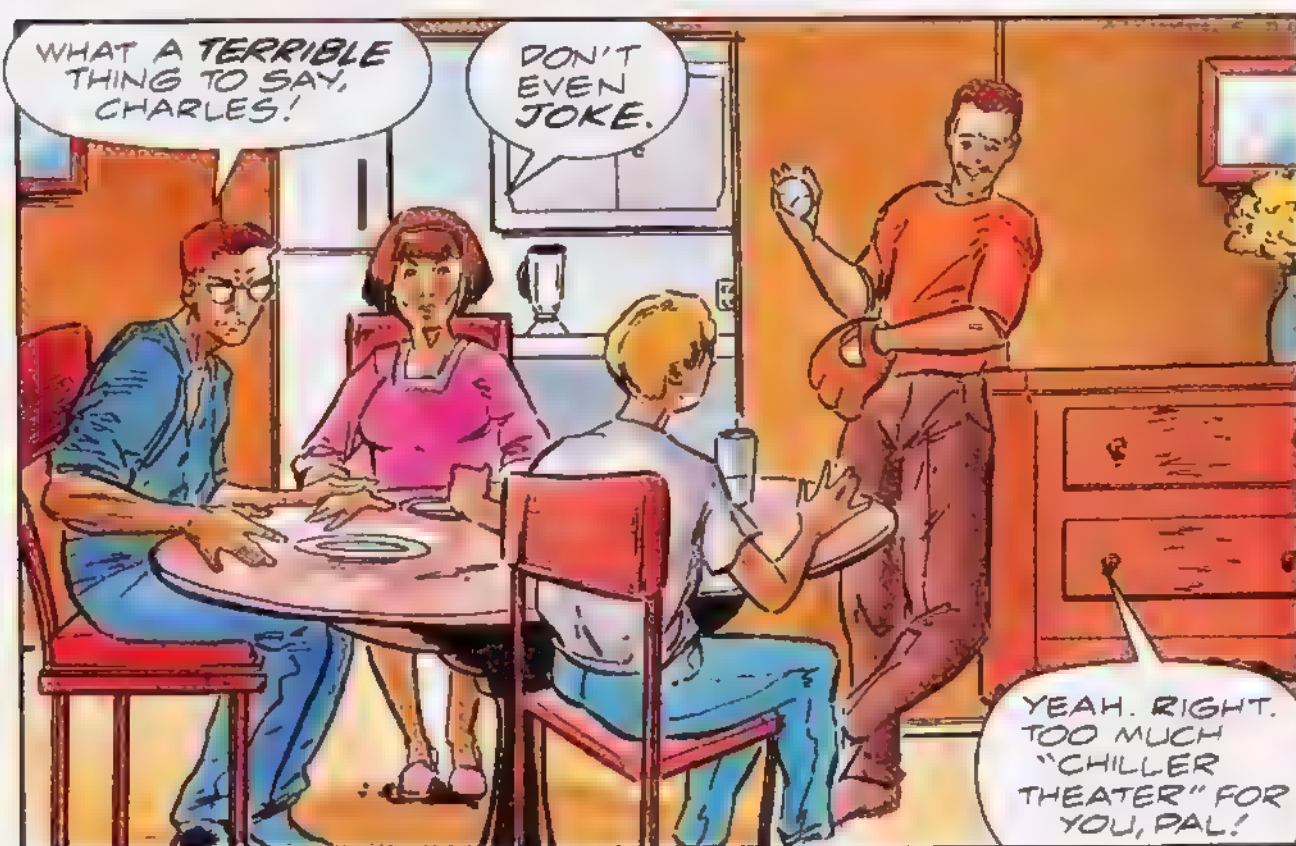
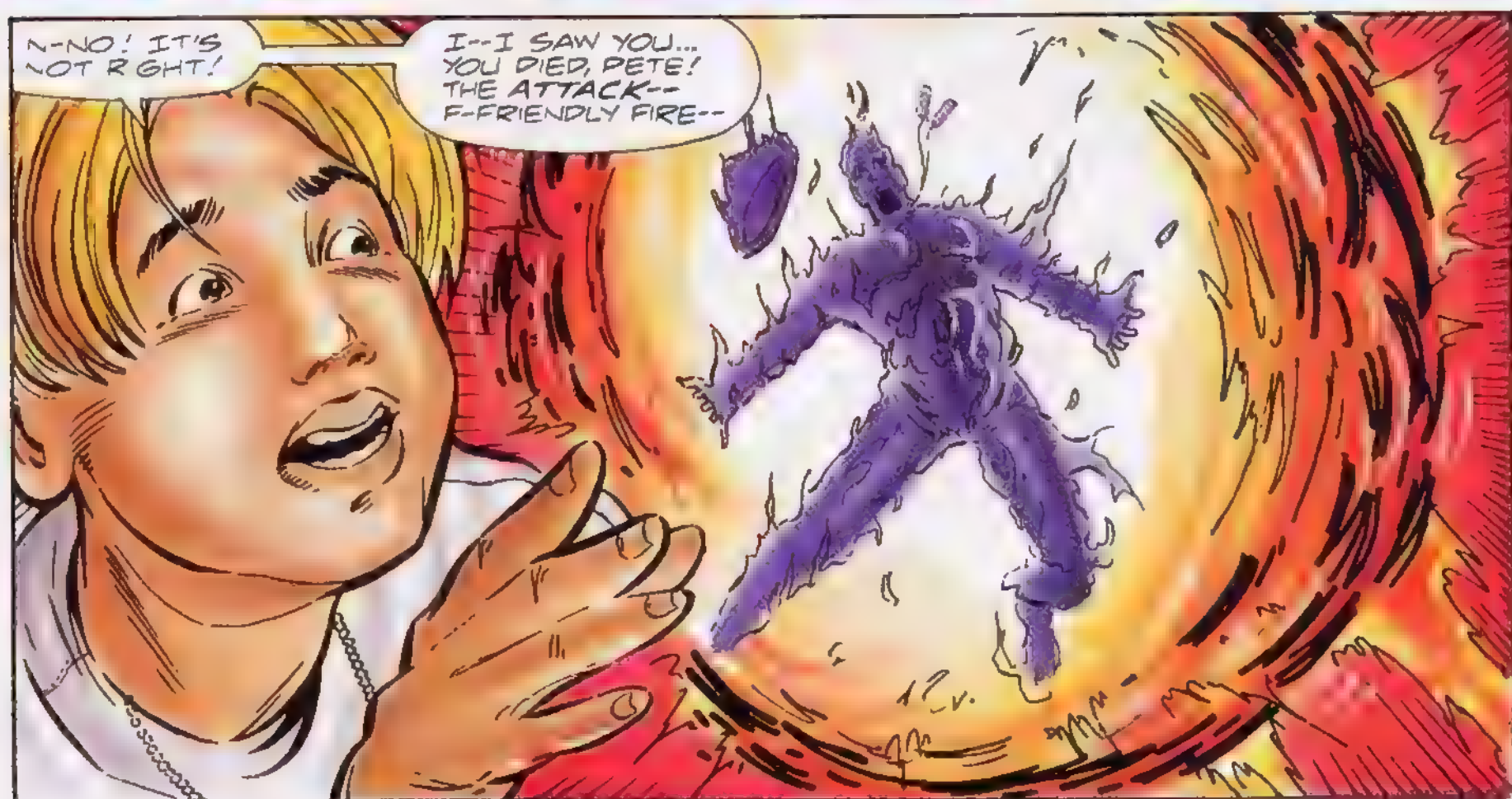
...AND DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT THE
ODDS.

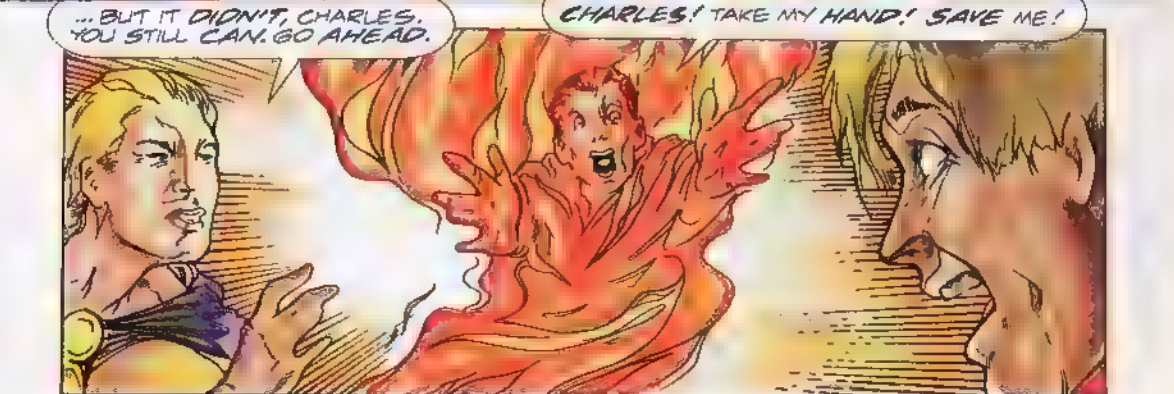
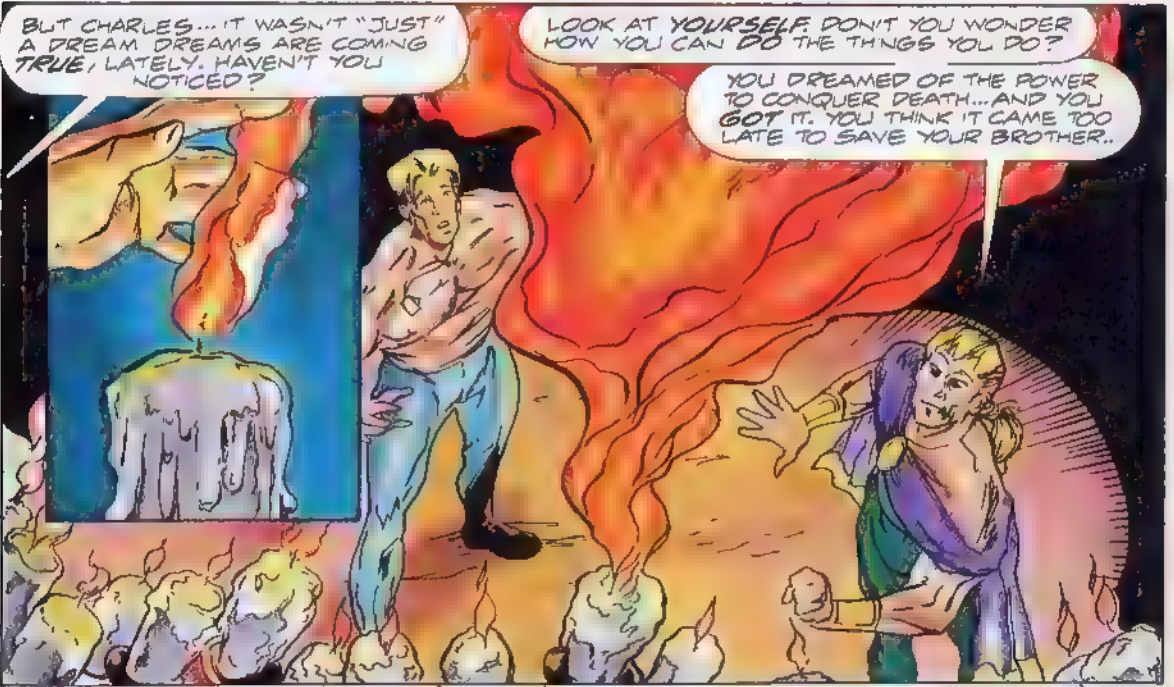
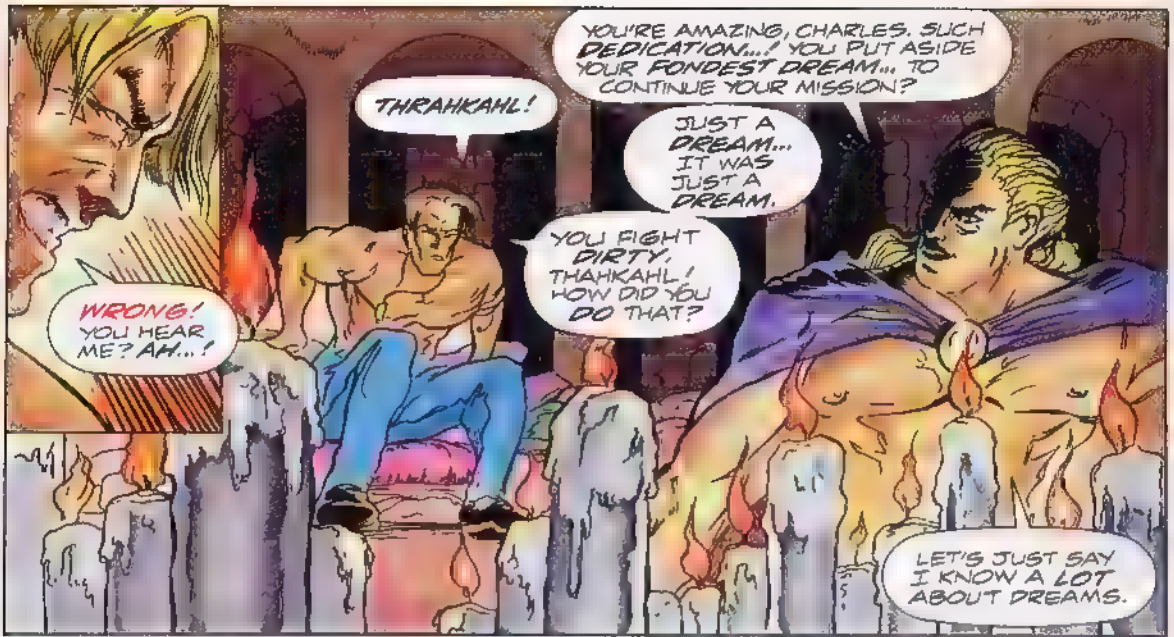
I ALWAYS SAID
IF I THINK I CAN,
I CAN NOW I'M
REALLY CONVNCED



TEACH ME
SOME
MORE,
MISTER T.







THIS IS A CRITICAL TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE, CHARLES.

ALL THE BARRERS SEPARATING DREAMS AND REALITY ARE FALLING

DREAMS CAN BE REAL NOW! GO AHEAD, TAKE YOUR BROTHER'S HAND

BUT THE DANCER..

THE DANCER.. AND I... WERE AMONG THE FIRST DREAMS TO BECOME REAL

..AND I'M GOING TO STOP HIM

HE'S A NIGHTMARE, HE SAYS HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD

THAT'S WHAT I THINK OF YOUR CON-JOB MAGIC TRICKS

CHARLES! PLEASE! LEAVE THE DANCER TO ME. I HAVE A PLAN..!

YEAH? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WOULD YOU HAVE LISTENED?

PROBABLY NOT SEE'YA

YOU.. YOU CAN TRAVERSE THE QUANTUM FIELD

YEP ONCE I SEE A TRICK A FEW TIMES I CATCH ON.

CHARLES! CHARLES! WAIT...! DON'T...!

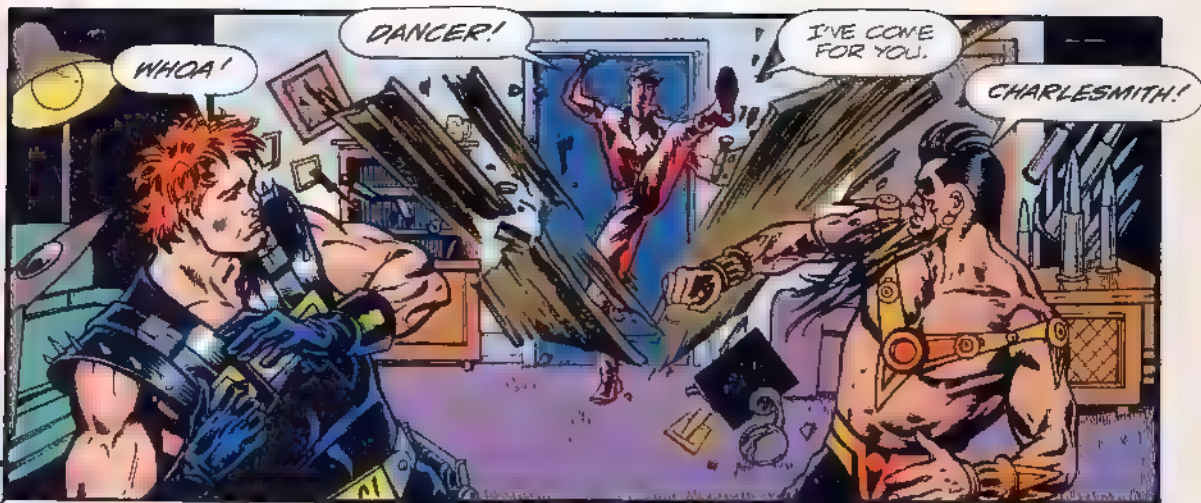
ARRHH!

IF YOU FORCE THE DANCER'S HAND.. THE END WILL BEGIN TOO SOON!

I'M NOT READY YET!

NEM'S BONES, CHARLES...!

BULL-HEADED



WHO A!

DANCER!

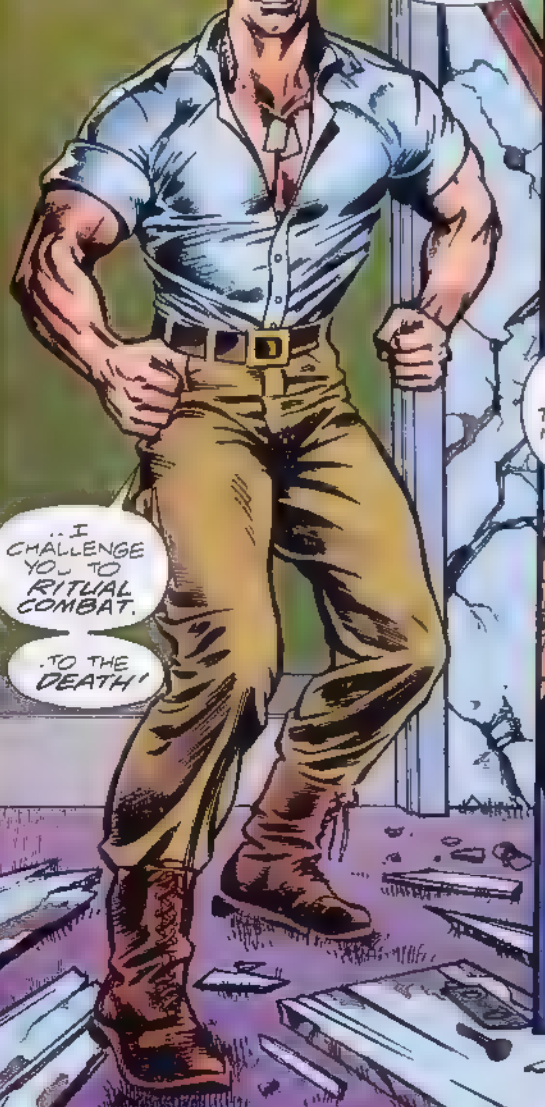
I'VE COME FOR YOU.

CHARLES SMITH!

YEAH, BUT NOT THE CHARLES SMITH YOU FOUGHT BEFORE

I'VE LEARNED A LOT... I'VE GOTTEN BETTER... STRONGER!

NOW, AT LAST, I'M READY TO BE THE CHAMPION OF LIFE! SO...



...I CHALLENGE YOU TO RITUAL COMBAT.

TO THE DEATH!



HOLD IT, BIG BOY. TO GET HIM, YOU GOTTA GO THROUGH ME!

LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.

BESIDES, WHY ARE YOU PROTECTING HIM?



HE'S MY FRIEND, THAT'S WHY! NOW, BACK OFF!

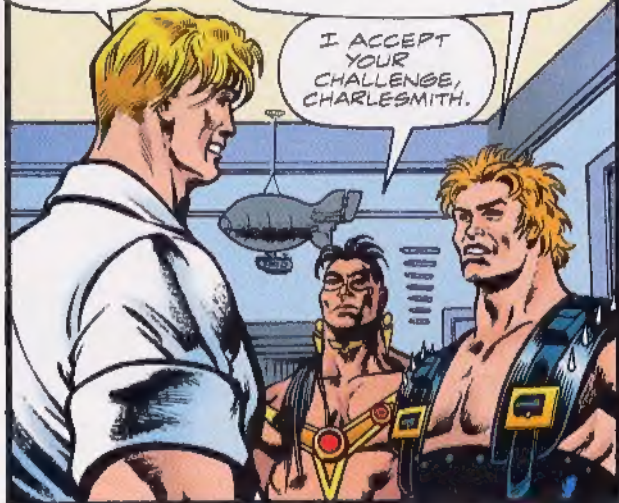
MISTER, YOUR "FRIEND" IS DEATH ITSELF--

--THE END OF THE WORLD ON THE HOOF!

GUESS HE
FORGOT TO
MENTION
THAT TO YOU,
HUH?

WELL... NO, HE SAID ONCE OR
TWICE THAT HE, UH, MIGHT
HAVE TO... UH... YOU KNOW,
DESTROY ALL EXISTENCE,
BUT...

I ACCEPT
YOUR
CHALLENGE,
CHARLESMITH.



GOOD.
YOU
READY?

A WARRIOR MUST
EVER BE READY
TO ACCEPT THE
WILL OF FATE.
FATE HAS BROUGHT
YOU HERE NOW...

HOLD IT!
THE DANGER'S
ALL BUNGED
UP AND
UNDONE AND
STUFF...



ALL RIGHT...
YOU GAVE
ME A
BREAK ONCE.

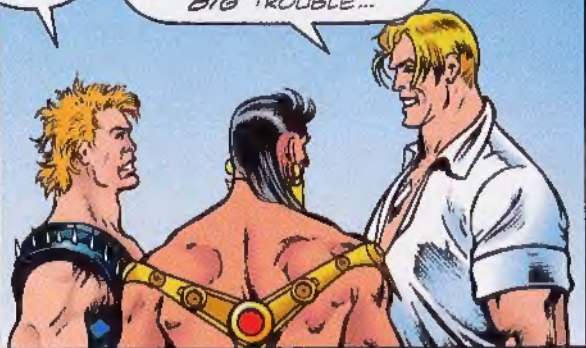
...SO I'LL
WAIT, A
LITTLE
WHILE.



WHO
THE
HECK
ARE
YOU,
ANY-
WAY?

ACCORDING TO YOUR BUDDY, HERE, I'M
THE GUY FATE PICKED TO STOP HIM
FROM KILLING EVERYBODY.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT
ANY OF THAT, BUT... I
KNOW HE'S TROUBLE...
BIG TROUBLE...



AHH... DON'T
SWEAT IT,
DANCER. HE'S
A CREAMPUFF.

WHY DON'T YOU CLEAN
UP A LITTLE-- YOU KNOW,
A NICE HOT SHOWER--
THEN WE'LL FIGURE
OUT WHAT TO DO
ABOUT THAT BOZO...

...AND I CAN
STOP HIM.

WHEN YOU'RE
READY,
DANCER... I'LL
COME FOR
YOU AGAIN.



LOS ANGELES...

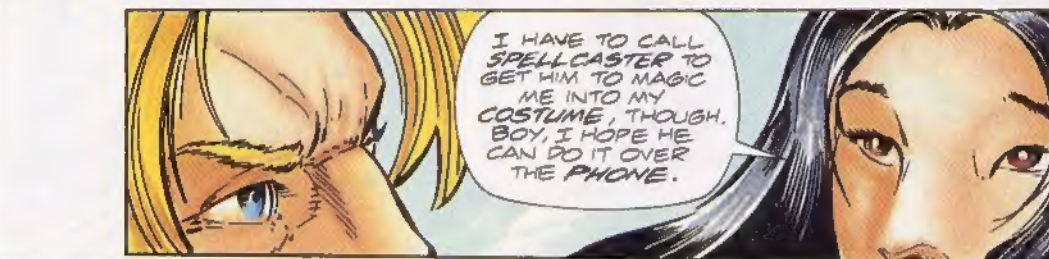
IT'S A LOT TO ASK... AND... AND I HARDLY KNOW YOU. I MEAN...

...I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR REAL NAME, I KNOW THE OTHER KIDS IN YOUR LITTLE GROUP CALL YOU "WHITE CRANE..."

YEAH. WE'RE TRYING TO DO A SUPER-HERO THING, LIKE IN WILDG.A.T.S OR YOUNGBLOOD. ANYWAY, MY NAME'S JENNI...

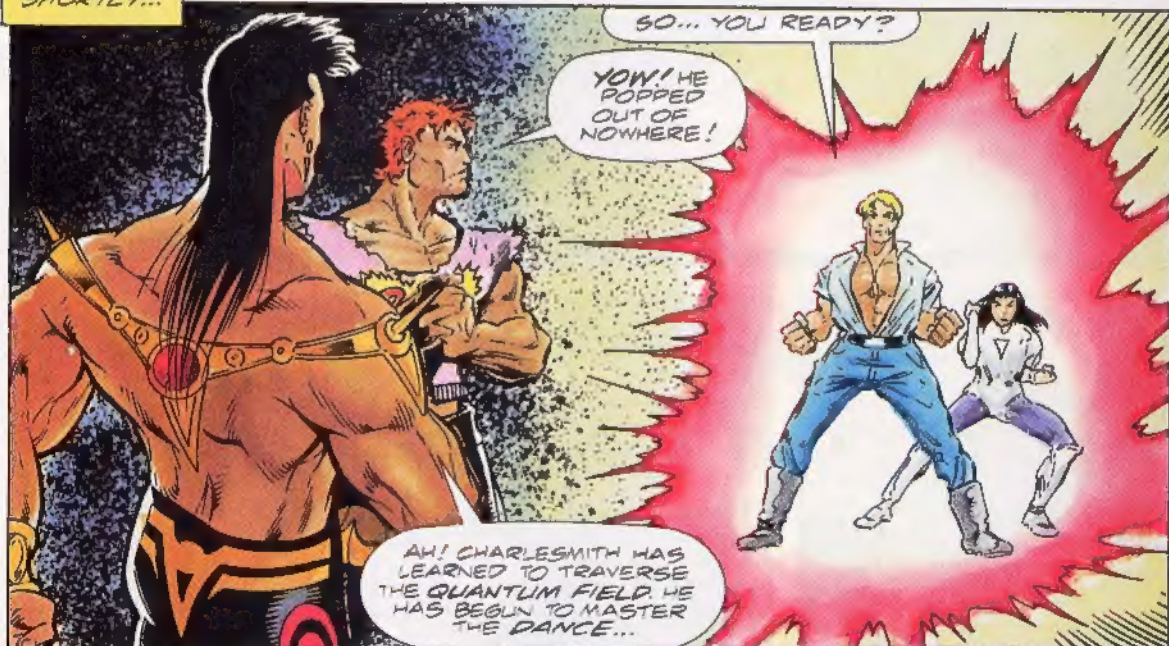
JENNI. WELL, ANYWAY, I'D LIKE TO HAVE SOMEBODY IN MY CORNER... AND... I KNOW YOU CAN HANDLE YOURSELF, AND...

I'D BE HONORED.



I HAVE TO CALL SPELLCASTER TO GET HIM TO MAGIC ME INTO MY COSTUME, THOUGH. BOY, I HOPE HE CAN DO IT OVER THE PHONE.

SHORTLY...



SO... YOU READY?

YOW! HE POPPED OUT OF NOWHERE!

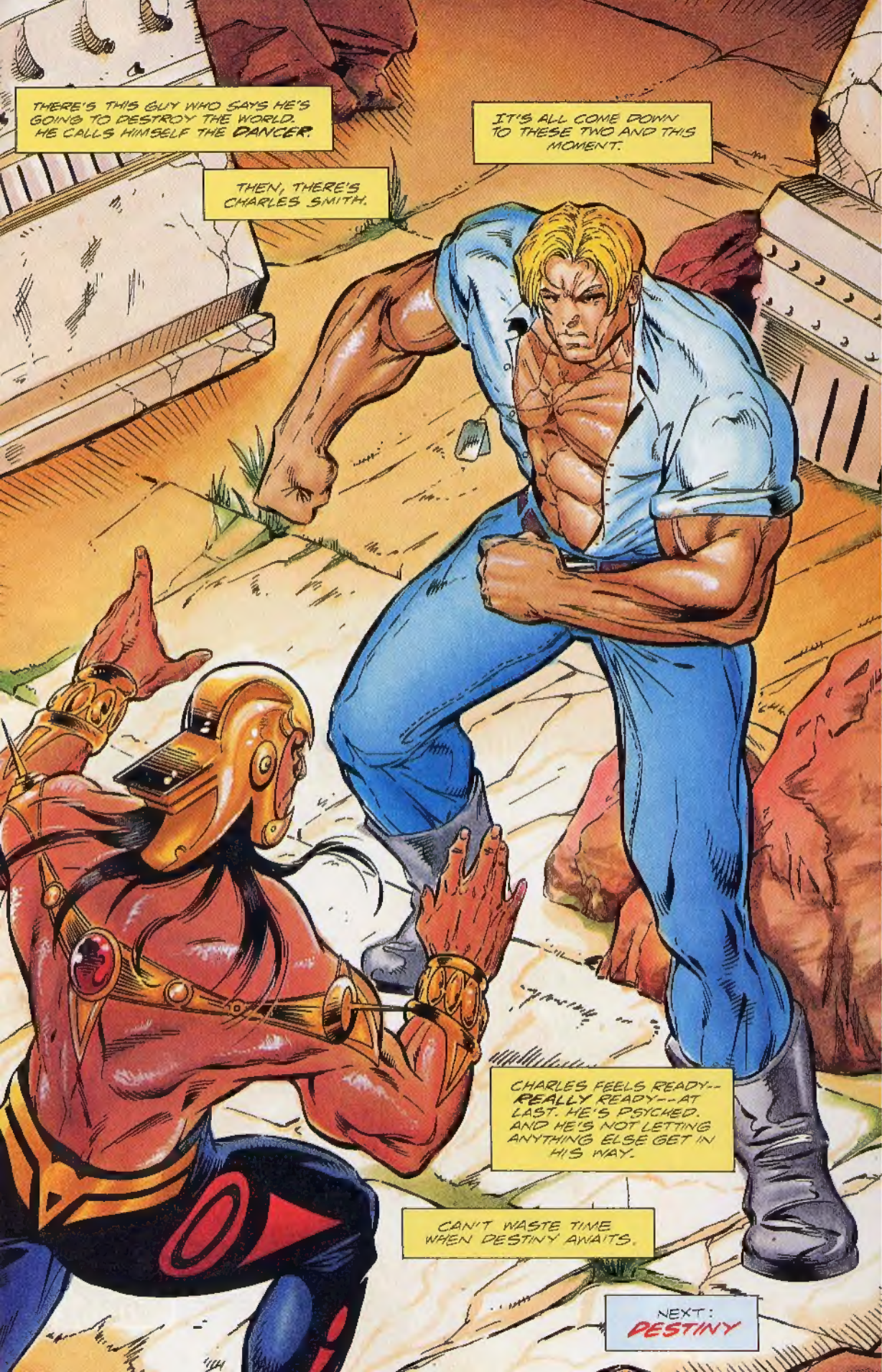
AH! CHARLES SMITH HAS LEARNED TO TRAVERSE THE QUANTUM FIELD. HE HAS BEGUN TO MASTER THE DANCE...

...AND SO, NOW HIS POWER TRULY RIVALS MINE.

YOU PICK THE PLACE, DANCER! JUST THINK OF WHERE YOU WANT TO BE!







THERE'S THIS GUY WHO SAYS HE'S
GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD.
HE CALLS HIMSELF THE DANCER.

IT'S ALL COME DOWN
TO THESE TWO AND THIS
MOMENT.

THEN, THERE'S
CHARLES SMITH.

CHARLES FEELS READY--
REALLY READY--AT
LAST. HE'S PSYCHED.
AND HE'S NOT LETTING
ANYTHING ELSE GET IN
HIS WAY.

CAN'T WASTE TIME
WHEN DESTINY AWAITS.

NEXT:
DESTINY